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Flood Relief Aid Leads to Humanitarian Medal

RANDOLPH AIR FORCE BASE, Texas (AFNS) -- The Office of the Secretary of the Army has announced approval of the Humanitarian Service Medal for those Air Force people who participated in the disaster relief operation North Central United States Floods 1997 in the following locations and dates:

- North Dakota: April 7 through June 3
- South Dakota: April 7 through May 6
- Minnesota: April 9 through April 29

Military members who distinguished themselves and directly participated in these operations are eligible for the Humanitarian Service Medal.

Direct participation is defined as being physically present at the designated location and having directly contributed to and influenced the action.

Specifically excluded from eligibility are members who were present for duty at the



specified location, but did not make a direct contribution to or influence the action. The commander in charge of the operation at the site makes the final determination on direct/indirect participation.

To verify individual eligibility, local military personnel flights or individuals may contact

the operation's office of primary responsibility -- the 319th Mission Support Squadron's career enhancements office at Grand Forks Air Force Base, N.D. Their telephone number is DSN 362-3269 or commercial (701) 747-3269. (Courtesy of Air Force Personnel Center News Service)

Defense Authorization Brings Quality-of-Life Improvements

The recently approved fiscal 1998 National Defense Authorization Act brings several improvements to the quality of life for Air Force people in the area of basic pay and allowances. The provision with the most impact on the most people is the 2.8 percent increase to basic pay, which becomes effective Jan. 1. This is the full pay raise provided for in law.

A reform of the Basic Allowance for Subsistence will bring a new food allowance for people living in the dorm who are "subsisted in kind" (eat at no charge in the dining facility). They will now draw an allowance besides being provided meals at no cost. During the five-year transition to the

new BAS, this allowance will increase from about \$9 per month to \$30 per month. Upon completion of the transition period, the allowance will increase at the same rate as a selected U.S. Department of Agriculture food index. This allowance recognizes the fact that dorm residents have food needs besides the dining facility. For example, they may want to prepare meals in their rooms, buy snacks or eat occasionally at restaurants.

Another quality-of-life improvement will come from reform of the Basic Allowance for Quarters and Variable Housing Allowance. The new Basic Allowance for Housing will combine BAQ and VHA. Of particular benefit is the provision that once assigned to a location, BAH will not decline at that location unless there is a change in a person's grade or dependency status. Previously, people were subject to allowance reductions if their housing expenses decreased.

Additionally, each member will now be entitled to the full BAH regardless of their status as a "sharer." Previously, each sharer's allowance was pro rated based on how much of the housing expenses the person paid. Military couples will now each receive the full single-rate BAH. For those couples with qualifying dependents, only one of the couple will receive the allowance at the "with dependent" rate.

For more information about basic pay and allowances, contact your financial services office.

Thanks to all of you that helped out with the flood relief effort. You can't get work like this on the outside.



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